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**Agriculture & Natural Resources**  
**Committee**

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**HB 1509**

**Brief Description:** Giving priority selection to forest fire suppression resource contractors that are located geographically close to fire suppression activities.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Kretz, Blake, Reykdal and Condotta.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the Department of Natural Resources, while directing fire suppression efforts, to give first priority to fire suppression resource contractors that are located geographically closer to the actual fire suppression activities and are capable of responding sooner, over similarly capable but geographically further fire suppression resource contractors.

**Hearing Date:** 2/5/15

**Staff:** Peter Clodfelter (786-7127).

**Background:**

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is the agency of the state with the direct charge and responsibility over all matters pertaining to forest fire services in the state. The DNR appoints trained personnel in order to carry out the DNR's duties. The DNR is obligated to employ sufficient numbers of personnel to extinguish or prevent the spreading of any fire that may be in danger of damaging or destroying any timber or other property of the DNR.

Also, when in the state's best interest and for the purposes of forest firefighting and patrol, the DNR may cooperate with any agency of another state, the United States or a federal agency, and any county, town, corporation, person, or native American tribe. Further, the DNR may contract and enter agreements with private corporations for the protection and development of the forest lands within the state.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Summary of Bill:**

While directing fire suppression efforts, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is required to give first priority to fire suppression resource contractors that are located geographically closer to the actual fire suppression activities and are capable of responding sooner, over similarly capable fire suppression resource contractors located geographically further from the fire suppression activities.

The selection of fire suppression resources based on geographic location and response speed capability are required to have priority over: (1) whether the contractor is a public or private resource or a warden, and (2) except in instances of significant price disparity, the comparable costs of the possible available resources. Comparable costs may be considered in resource prioritization only if the total cost of the geographically farther resource is anticipated to be less than the total cost of the geographically closer resource considering the added total fire suppression cost resulting from the delay in resource delivery incurred by selecting the geographically farther resource.

The DNR is required to take administrative steps to ensure the prioritization requirement is implemented before actual fire suppression activities occur. Administrative steps may include, among other things, reaching out to and training potential fire resource dispatch operations, creating agreements with local fire suppression resource contractors in the communities in the state that are prone to fire, and creating working relationships with county governments that allow a county to liaison between the DNR and the available and preemptively identified fire suppression resource contractors based in the county.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.